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Church and Society

A BULLETIN ON SOCIAL QUESTIONS

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I. COMMENTS ON THE MEMORANDUM OF THE PREPARATORY COMMISSION SOCIAL QUESTIONS : THE RESPONSIBLE SOCIETY IN A WORLD PERSPECTIVE

To the first number of this Bulletin we appended a copy of the memorandum published October 1953, by the Preparatory Commission for the Assembly topic, Social Questions, The Responsible Society in a World Perspective. This memorandum outlined the problems which the Commission believed should be discussed at Evanston, and also presented certain tentative opinions regarding the manner in which the churches might speak on these issues. In this second number of the bulletin we summarize a number of comments which have been received on the memorandum and which indicate the kind of issues that are likely to be raised in the discussions on this topic at the Assembly.

Some general reactions to the memorandum

It is promising for the discussions at Evanston that the great majority of the comments approve of the general approach followed by the Commission in its memorandum. Criticism is concentrated mainly on the wording of particular sections, where it is felt that the Commission has not adequately stated or has actually mistated the issue. There is general agreement that in focussing attention on (1) the function of the state in modern economic life, (2) priorities in the economic system, (3) social problems of the underdeveloped countries, (4) the Christian witness in Communist society and (5) the significance of international economic and political developments in relation to various social questions, the Commission has raised the important questions. However, several critical statements on the character and structure of the report have been received. A professor of economics in the United States criticizes the document for being too broad in scope and as in need of a unifying theme. He writes:

> "I have come to the conclusion, held without overwhelming conviction... that the pamphlet attempts to cover too much ground and to speak to

too many issues. It lacks a unifying theme. In part its failure to make more impact is due to its judicious and balanced point of view. I was struck by the number of times it used the expressions 'on the one hand' and 'on the other hand' ; 'in some countries' , 'in others', etc.

I hesitate to suggest a unifying theme because I shall probably walk into a fallacy long exploded by students of Christian ethics. Nonetheless, it seems to me that the emphasis must be on Christian brotherhood, on equality (at least of opportunity), on non-discrimination. Balance is still called for, because we all know that no single social goal will work to the exclusion of everything else; this is possible in war and in a crusade, but not in ordinary life..."

Is it possible to reach agreement on a unifying theme in a document which attempts, as this one does, to include the many different ethical issues confronting the churches in the present world situation?

In an article on the Assembly preparations in Le Semeur (magazine of the Student Christian Movement in France) Prof.Burgelin of the University of Strasbourg also points to the need for a central theme in the discussion of social questions and offers his own opinion on what that might be:

"In every case the situation is the same. We are in a certain state of the world characterized by the diversity of its aspects. Everywhere a sort of humanistic ideal is being proposed, a kind of symptom of our civilisation which ends by imposing itself, even on those peoples who up till now have refused it; India, China. The East and the West have finally placed their confidence in reason and in technical achievement as a means of solving all problems, and the language they speak differs only in its appearance. The world really has a hope: it believes in salvation through techniques, it believes in developing and perfecting men through a scientific culture. Almost everywhere religion is considered unimportant, or at any rate is regarded as nothing more than a psychological technique needed by men whose hearts have not yet been overcome by the world. It is this hope which ultimately confronts the Christian hope. People everywhere believe that science is effective while faith may content itself with offering help to men who are struggling with 'spiritual difficulties' (some day to be replaced by psychoanalysis?) or with their personal destiny: death and suffering. Should something of this hope in techniques and science be retained or should it be denounced as radically false? Must we affirm that the irrational will always be stronger than the rational, or that techniques will only lead to atomic catastrophe or to bureaucratic dictatorship enforced by police methods?"

Christians, in other areas of the world especially in Asia, would strongly oppose this view of industrialism as too negative, and the preparatory Commission itself is convinced that such a view does

not do justice "to the possibilities of economic life today as an object for responsible action". Here is an issue on which Christian thinking will undoubtedly continue to be greatly divided.

The Responsible Society as the Unifying Theme

Does the concept of the Responsible Society provide a unifying theme for ecumenical discussion of social responsibility?

In the term the Responsible Society the Commission felt that it was using a phrase which had already gained wide acceptance in ecumenical studies on social questions. As used in the Amsterdam report and in more recent ecumenical studies, the Responsible Society contains certain ideas which may be summarized as follows :

(1) Economic and political systems are areas of Christian responsibility. The Church is required to help its members discover the criteria which they must use in making the difficult choices involved in determining social policy.

(2) The Church may not identify itself with any economic or political system. From the Christian perspective society is not an end in itself but points beyond itself to the sovereignty of God. All social systems are from this perspective incomplete and relative rather than final and absolute.

(3) Men are responsible for each other. Within nations and between nations the economically strong are responsible for the economically weak.

(4) Man must never be treated as a means to an end by society but as a free and responsible being. Certain developments: modern technical industrial society, the growth of the modern state, the theory of autonomous economic systems, totalitarianism, in varying degree are dangers to human personality.

(5) The Responsible Society implies a reciprocal responsibility of the citizen and the state or the individual and the community. Those who have power in the state are responsible to the people and the people are responsible for the welfare of the community.

It is evident from numerous comments that these points are not generally understood in the Churches and need to be referred to in future statements. Certain replies do, however, show that there is a basic agreement with the idea of the Responsible Society. For example, in discussions at a pre-Evanston conference in Germany, it was emphasized that :

> "All social and political solutions are relative in space and time. In many areas of the world it will be our Christian duty to enter resolutely into the battle for a social welfare state. In certain countries in the West, on the other hand, it may be our duty to

fight against the tendencies of the welfare state to become an unwieldly bureaucratic machinery which narrows down the spheres of personal responsibility and initiative and vests responsibility in an anonymous bureaucracy."

It was also said that "the chief issue before the section on social questions at Evanston will be the independence of the Church and of its social judgment" as expressed in the concept of the Responsible Society. "To maintain this position of independence of social judgment steadfastly at Evanston, in spite of the pressures of the American environment, will signify a gain, even if the report on this point would not advance beyond the Amsterdam Report".

Referring to the need for the Church to maintain an independent judgment on social issues, a group of European businessmen and economists ask why the Commission in its interpretation of the Responsible Society does not state clearly that it criticizes not only "the totalitarian systems of the right or of the left", but also the economic systems which are associated with the socalled "middle" or "third way"? To avoid the implication that the Responsible Society is identical with an intermediate or middle way, future statements should indicate more clearly the positive Christian criteria which should be used in criticizing all systems.

Eschatology and Social Action

A number of comments on the memorandum point out that it fails to consider the relation of the main theme of the Assembly, Christ the Hope of the World, to the Responsible Society topic. Does the Commission feel that there is an incompatibility between the main theme and the concern for social questions? Does the emphasis on eschatology undermine the concern for social responsibility?

The Commission in fact discussed this question very thoroughly in its meeting last summer. The discussion can be summarized as follows:

The Commission was impressed by the fact that for Christians in many countries eschatology is the foundation of a very vigorous and dynamic concern for social problems. In a paper presented to the group, Prof. Wendland (Germany) emphasized that in thinking about social action it is important to face the eschatological question: "What is the relation of Christian action in an impermanent historical situation to the ultimate purpose of the Kingdom of God?" The recent experience of Christians has led them to see more clearly than before the relationship between the Christian hope in the future and transcendent Kingdom of God and the Christian concern for society. The Christian hope in the end of the world means on the one hand detachment and freedom from the world and at the same time is a source of strength in the struggle against the demonic

forces at work today. "The more sharply the Church delimits itself from the world, the greater its formative influence will be", Prof. Wendland argued. "Protestantism, having in the past few centuries lost sight of this truth, became impotent to mould others in proportion as its detachment from the world fell away... Hope confers freedom from all history's ecclesiastical formations and social patterns...". The new interest in social action in the churches of Western Europe and the power of the Church in Eastern Europe in resisting the demands of totalitarian communism are in fact based on the rediscovery of the confidence which comes from the Christian hope, a hope which "abides after ethical potentialities for moulding the world have completely vanished". The Church must discipline itself to keep to the eschatological. It is the Church's safeguard against the view that it "... is called to found a new social order, and could well do so if only it would take its courage in both hands and devote sufficiently comprehensive study to the problems involved."

This discussion led to a consensus within the Commission which may be summarised briefly as follows:

In a world in the midst of profound frustration, the Christian hope in the new creation of God is an important dimension of Christian faith. The neglect of this dimension in the past has been a weakness in Christian social thinking. The emphasis on the Christian hope helps to guard against a false type of conservatism, against utopianism and against the idolatry of any social cause or institution. At the same time it gives power, motivation and courage for the action of the Church and of Christians in society.

Christianity, Free Enterprise and the State

A number of extremely interesting comments have been received on those sections of the memorandum dealing with the problems of economic life, and in particular, the section on "The Function of the State in Economic Life". Generally speaking the Commission's analysis of the present situation is accepted, but questions are raised about some of the conclusions reached on the basis of this analysis. It is argued that the document should state more strongly than it does that increasing state power is the greatest threat to social and economic progress. People have turned to the state for economic security, but the result has been to destroy freedom and undermine personal responsibility. In speaking on social questions, the churches should be aware of the dangers of state intervention in economic life. The memorandum of the Commission does not set sufficiently definite limits to such intervention. A businessman from France expresses this view most clearly. Free enterprise looked at not as an economic technique but as a pattern of life, is a product of Christian principles. It has flourished primarily in Christian areas of the world and is only maintained where people have an understanding of Christian morality.

Admittedly the state must restrict certain practices in modern economic life, but there is a tendency to ask the state to undertake too much with the result that freedom is gradually diminished. This is particularly noticeable in France. Free enterprise is more than an economic system because it involves a way of life which can only be maintained with a high sense of the moral responsibilities which accompany freedom. It is from this standpoint that it can be said that the increase of state power is a part of the general de-Christianizing tendency which characterizes our world. While the memorandum recognizes the dangers of "the all-controlling state" and the important contribution in modern economic life of the expert, enterprising businessman, it is important to say more clearly than the document does that enterprise, if it is flexible, free and efficient, makes an essential contribution to society. Specifically it was suggested that the sentence in the document which reads "The functions of the State which must be accepted include responsibility to prevent serious depression or inflation and to relieve the impact of unemployment, of sickness, etc.", should indicate rather that state action to prevent unemployment is only a measure of last resort.

However, the Commission has also been urged to remember that in all consideration of the growing intervention of the state it is wrong to make the state the chief devil. The state has to intervene to remedy the depersonalization which is due to the growth of modern industrial society with its mass organizations of men and the resulting breakdown of integrated community life. The intervention of the state is necessary to create order in modern technical, geographically centralized, industrial urban society. On this point a French group, Christianisme Social, writes :

> "We do not pretend certainly that the situation thus created does not hide some serious dangers. But we affirm very strongly that it will not be possible to resolve the problem of the modern state by isolating it from the historical and sociological context which really explains its transformations".
>
> (Christianisme Social, Jan.-Fév.1954, p.38)

From this point of view, therefore, there can be less reliance on the state only if persons and groups become more responsible, and if the creation of a real sense of community in modern urban environment is achieved.

A question is also raised about the accuracy of the phrase "planning for full employment", which appears several times in the document. An American who favours action to counteract the business cycle notes that in the United States it is more accurate to say : "The planning is to prevent unemployment".

A French economist points out that in the sentence "Justice demands that economic activities be subordinated to social ends...", there is a false antithesis between economic and social. It should

not be stated as though the economic is subordinate to the social, because the two are in fact in an interdependent or a dialectical relationship.

In several replies it is argued that the memorandum should mention more fully the undesirable and unexpected results of state planning and control: from the United States: "... one of the most important results of full employment policy is in destroying international economic cooperation. It should be mentioned here specifically" ; from Belgium: "is it not necessary to mention that the 'welfare state' has sometimes led to a falling back on autarchy which constitutes a kind of paradoxical return to nationalism?"

In view of these different points of view it will not be easy at Evanston to reach agreement on the function of the state in economic life today. Some letters criticize the memorandum for not stating these differences more frankly. An American businessman writes: " The recognition that it is difficult to speak about common Christian conceptions applies not only to the Communist issue, but applies to a considerable degree to the general economic issue." Disagreement on this issue, though not all, can be overcome by a definition of terms and the avoidance of words or phrases which have a high emotional content in various countries.

Is the memorandum realistic and true in its appraisal of Western civilization and of communism ?

Some correspondents believe that the memorandum is, on the one hand, very negative and overly critical in evaluating the merits of so-called "western civilization" and, on the other hand, very cautious and hesitant in criticizing communism. Should not the churches emphasize the positive as well as the negative aspects of western political and economic life ? The contributions of western civilization to human advancement are very real. Despite various defects there has been a continuing effort to express the Christian view of man and society. The memorandum should say so in clear terms.

On the other hand, should not the churches also express very clearly their moral condemnation of communism ? The memorandum makes it appear that communism is a problem only for the countries behind the iron curtain, but it is also a real and dangerous force in many western countries. Several critics object to the sentence: "In some countries it (communism) has brought muchneeded social reforms; in others it has supplanted a healthy democratic society."

Has the net effect of communism in any country been social reform? In those countries where the feudal land-holding systems have been broken up and the land divided amongst the peasants, the communist state later introduced the scheme of collective farms, thus cancelling the social reforms. There is need for a statement pointing out the evils of communism and expressing a strong condemnation of the communist system.

A further comment on this section comes from a British correspondent who points out that anti-communist hysteria is not the main problem for many non-communist countries :

> "My contention is that probably an even more important task at this moment lies in countries which do not have anti-communist hysteria and are not yet communist-dominated countries. In countries such as these, where communism is trying to infiltrate into many parts of business, commerce, industry and society in general, it is surely of urgent importance that the churches and missionary leaders should train young Christians in the techniques of the encounter with communism which is on their doorstep":

In answer to these criticisms it must be acknowledged that the Commission did neglect to make clear certain assumptions. In its reference to communism it was speaking on the basis of the statement of Section III of the Amsterdam Assembly in which the points of conflict between Christianity and "the atheistic Marxian communism of our day" are clearly presented. To avoid similar misunderstandings in the future it will be necessary to refer specifically to this Amsterdam statement. But aside from this misunderstanding there is a new question, i.e. whether in view of developments since the Amsterdam meeting, the churches which belong to the ecumenical movement are in greater or less agreement about their attitude to communism than they were at Amsterdam. A passage in the recently published Message from the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren to Protestants Throughout the World (October 31, 1953) indicates the views of some Christians in Eastern Europe :

> "We are uncertain whether or not you will understand us, but we nevertheless wish to tell you what things disturb us the most. We are full of misgiving at the thought, that it was the Christian countries which caused the great catastrophe of World War I and II as well as the terrible chaos among the nations of the world. We are terrified at the thought that it was the riches and power of Christian countries which for long decades and centuries have grown on the poverty and toil of poor and backward nations. And that is why we - in repentance - want to understand the great process of history taking place in the eastern European and Asiatic countries, and especially in those nations which are awakening from a colonial status and long to take the control of their public life into their own hands and long to be accepted as equals into the community of mankind. We cannot judge anyone, but on our own behalf we wish to confess that we cannot do anything else than bow down before Divine judgments and, in the solidarity of sin and grace, accept them as the judgments of mercy and as a precious opportunity for new beginnings."

Furthermore, will Christians from Asia and Africa agree that it is desirable to make a strong positive statement about the values

of western civilization? To what extent and in what manner will Christians from the west feel that it is imperative to defend aspects of western civilization as valid expressions of the Responsible Society? These questions will certainly arise at Evanston.

Comment on sections of the memorandum dealing with the Structure of Political Life, Equality, the Role of Organized Groups, and Advertising.

Four passages in the memorandum dealing with the criteria for political life, equality, the role of organized groups and advertising aroused especially vigorous criticism.

(a) The section dealing with the structure of political life leads a British correspondent to write :

> "Personally, I am in complete agreement with the criteria listed, but it should perhaps be made clear that these are the criteria of nineteenth century Anglo-American liberalism. I don't think the document emphasizes enough how entirely contrary to the political temper of our times all this is. I suggest that freedom for minorities is much more important historically than votes for all."

And referring specifically to the statement that "all peoples have a right to national freedom and social justice", the same writer expresses a judgment which is echoed in a number of replies :

> "I am not at all sure that all peoples have a right to 'national freedom', unless you define this very carefully. Isn't this a bit more of the nineteenth century? The emphasis on liberalism before 1914 was, in my view, admirable: the emphasis on nationalism excessive. Metternich was partly right here! How can there be any peace in the Balkans without a great deal of multi-national and multi-racial organization."

In considering "the right to national freedom" it is suggested that there be a reference to the efforts of the Western European countries to achieve supra-national unity and to the responsibility of Christians to support such efforts.

(b) In the paragraph dealing with equality exception is taken to the sentence "For Christians, equality remains an essential standard by which we must criticize the institutions of our society...." What kind of equality is meant? It is suggested that a definition of equality is needed which would make clear the Christian use of the word as distinct from socialist or communist usage. In most comments it was agreed that, for Christians, equality of opportunity is an important criterion.

(c) The section dealing with the role of organized groups was also strongly criticized. (Many readers found "guaranteed rules of the game" an unsatisfactory if not an incomprehensible phrase.) There

was much criticism of the sentences dealing with the role of organized labour, in particular the sentence: "The churches should welcome the greatly increased influence of trade unions and the participation of labour in the management of enterprise (joint production committees, industrial councils, comités d'entreprise, Mitbestimmung, etc.)" To many this appeared to suggest that the churches actually favoured Mitbestimmung (co-responsibility) of workers in the management of enterprise, and it is asked: by what principles did the churches come to this conclusion? Is it possible to deal with such a complicated question in one sentence?

An English businessman suggests that in discussing the role of organized groups in terms of pressure groups like trade unions and employer's associations, the document misses the main point:

> "The document never mentions companies yet it is in companies that men and women work and suffer and witness, while the nature of the working company or groups is the fons et origo of the dispute between East and West. Have Christians nothing to say about limited liability and the shareholders' relation to the worker in the Western world? Can Christianity for the first time in its long history totally ignore the problem of the just return of capital? How are workers in companies to be regarded, as hands or as human beings, and if the latter by what Christian criteria are we to judge the policies of the companies in which they work? What is to be the means of balancing the claims on companies of consumers, community, workers and shareholders? What exactly is the responsibility of the company to its locality, in short, where are the Christian criteria for a just economic order in terms of the associations or companies which form it?"

The Preparatory Commission did not intend to place a Christian sanction on any specific form of industrial relations, but wished only to cite some examples of the way in which the tensions between workers and employers are being overcome. The Commission dit not feel qualified to enter into the question of the structure of enterprise. The problem of industrial relations differs very much from country to country, and the churches can say little until there has been careful study of the issues. Obviously the sentences in question need to be redrafted to avoid confusion. As a possible rewording of the controversial sentence the following has been suggested :

> "The churches should welcome the greatly increased influence of labour and its collaboration (some say consultation) with the management of enterprise in every way to increase the material resources of society for human welfare."

(d) Several of our critics remark that the paragraph on the "ethics of salesmanship" is unfair to advertising and that mention should be made of the positive value of advertising for a dynamic economy.

It is argued that in speaking about the "dangerous tendencies" of advertising "to create unnecessary wants, etc." the memorandum begs the main question. What are unnecessary wants? Is the Commission prepared to define its terms?

Social Problems of the Underdeveloped Countries

There is general agreement that the memorandum is correct in emphasizing the importance of Christian concern for the social problems of the underdeveloped countries, and there is agreement also with the way in which the basic issues are stated. But it is argued that what is said in the memorandum applies mainly to Asia and Africa and not equally to Latin America. Moreover, the problem for the underdeveloped countries is not merely industrialization but a balanced industrialization; too rapid industrialization would bring more social difficulties than it would solve. Guarantees to encourage foreign investors are especially important and the section on this point should be emphasized and elaborated. Without some guarantee of normal law and order there could be very little hope of attracting private investment. The importance of immediate action to help the underdeveloped countries is stressed, though it is emphasized that the process will take time. An American, with experience in this field criticizes the memorandum as follows:

> "In dealing with the problems of underdeveloped countries there is no suggestion that one of the most important virtues is patience. 'Bold programmes' still require public understanding and participation. People do not change overnight and perhaps not in less than a generation."

The contribution of the Christian community in helping to build stable and responsible political structures in the new nations in Asia is emphasized in a comment from South East Asia:

> "To make this society a responsible society - the churches without any doubt have a specific task in this whole process of changing and renewing - the people have to learn that freedom alone means nothing. There must be a balance between freedom and responsibility, freedom and authority..."

"It is clear that the first task of the new states in South East Asia is to put their own house in order, so as to reach political, economic and social stability. A decision has first to be made towards which political, economic and social goal they have to strive and work, e.g. the burning question in my country now is: What kind of state is it going to become? Herein the Christian communities have to work and act as warning posts."

The Social Concern as a Part of the Missionary Concern

In relation to the problems of the underdeveloped countries the passages of the memorandum dealing with the social concern as a part of the missionary concern, are considered to be very important. A correspondent from Britain writes:

"I am sure this is very important. I have just had the opportunity to contrast a report given by an L.M.S. missionary in Samoa, and his attitude to political developments there, with the position in parts of Kenya, where the African Christians are wonderfully brave, yet totally ignorant of their political responsibilities - and this attitude to politics they must have learnt partly from their missionaries."

It is urged that the points made in this section of the document should be given thorough review by missionary people both in administration and in the field. The memorandum has been circulated to a number of missionaries but comments have not been received.

Conclusions

In this review of the comments on the memorandum of the Preparatory Commission, we have avoided passing judgment on the merits of the points raised. However, in conclusion the following remarks may be in order:

1. In general the critical comments received reflect the views of people in western countries. Businessmen and economists have been particularly interested in commenting on the document.

2. In many comments it is suggested that the scope of the topic be expanded to include a discussion of the problems of rural life, family, industry, community problems, etc. Others have pointed out that the scope of the present memorandum is already too wide and that it tries "to cover the economic problems of the world in fifteen pages". It is obvious that new topics cannot be added because there is not time for adequate preparation on new subjects. It seems to be generally agreed that the document should place emphasis on really decisive points where the Christian conscience is challenged in the present situation.

3. The disagreements with the memorandum have been emphasized in this review. However, there is general appreciation of the efforts of the Commission to be specific about the Christian responsibility today without becoming preoccupied with issues which are of primarily regional concern.

P. Abrecht

II. ECUMENICAL DOCUMENTS ON CHURCH AND SOCIETY

This is the title of a new volume of 172 pages just published by the Study Department. The publication is a collection of some twenty documents and excerpts in which the World Council of Churches (and earlier the Life and Work Movement) and the International Missionary Council have spoken on social questions from the Stockholm Conference to the present. Included are the complete texts of the Message of the Stockholm Conference (1925), the Oxford Conference Report on the Economic Order (1937), the statements of I.M.C.-Conferences of Jerusalem (1928) and Tambaram (1938) on industrial and economic problems, the Report of Section III at Amsterdam (1948), the Lucknow Study Conference Report on The Responsible Society in East Asia (1952), and other important papers in which ecumenical groups have expressed themselves on political, social, and economic issues.

Brought together for the first time in one volume, these documents provide a kind of conspectus of ecumenical social thinking over the years. The collection is designed especially to assist persons interested in the work on social questions at the Evanston Assembly in looking up the past actions of the ecumenical movement in this field. The volume contains a topical index to enable readers to find the statements on particular issues in which they may be interested, and there is a brief introduction to each document giving its historical setting.

It is hoped that readers of Church and Society will be interested in securing this valuable reference work. Copies may be ordered from the Study Department, World Council of Churches, 17, route de Malagnou Geneva, Switzerland. The price is Sw.frs. 5.-- ; $ 1.50 ; 8/ shillings, postage included.

J. T.

III. AN ECUMENICAL SURVEY ON SOCIAL QUESTIONS

The Ecumenical Survey on "Social Questions: The Responsible Society in a World Perspective" has now been published, along with the surveys on the five other sub-themes and the final report of the Advisory Commission on the Main Theme. This survey is one of major items in the preparations for the Evanston Assembly.

The document, running to some sixty-five printed pages, is a comprehensive review of the recent thought and action of the churches around the world in relation to the issues of the social, political, and economic order. Material was gathered over a period of many months, a large part of it from reports of ecumenical study groups

in the several countries. This material was edited and compiled under the supervision of the Preparatory Commission on Social Questions, of which Prof. John C.Bennett of the U.S.A. and Dr. C.L. Patijn of Holland are co-chairmen.

The survey consists of three main sections. The first offers a brief analysis of the major characteristics of the world social situation in which the churches have found themselves in recent years. The second and much the longest section deals with the thought and action of the churches around the world in the face of the problems raised by this situation. There are chapters dealing with the churches of Great Britain, the United States, the European continent, the underdeveloped countries, and the communist countries. The final part presents a brief statement of the problems and tasks facing the churches.

Under the heading "The World Social Revolution", the first chapter speaks of the "vast world upheaval" which recent history reveals, and which radically affects the nature of the churches' responsibility in society. This world revolution has many dimensions; among those most important for the churches' thinking is the new conception and function of the economic system in relation to the democratic state in the Western industrial countries. The new "welfare" functions of the state and the results they have produced, now so widely accepted in these countries, raise important questions for the churches in their interpretation of the goals of economic life. At the same time that laissez-faire capitalism has been modified in practice, traditional socialism has also modified many of its views. The result is that in most western countries a discussion of "capitalism versus socialism" in ideological terms is no longer relevant to the search for economic policies which will answer the world's pressing social needs. This means that there is in process a "fundamental rethinking of the goals of political and economic life", not only in national terms but on a world basis. In the face of this fact, the radically new situation of many of the so-called "underdeveloped" countries is of particular importance.

What is the response of the churches to this situation? The survey states generally that there is a greater awareness than perhaps ever before of the fact that with regard to social issues "the guidance of Christian thinking in relation to them ought to be one of the central concerns of the Church". At the same time, however, there is in many places and for many reasons an increasing apathy toward social questions among church people. It is suggested that the most fruitful work in this field may in the future come from areas where the church is living amid great social pressures and dangers - in Europe, in the communist countries, and in the underdeveloped countries.

It is impossible to do justice in brief scope to the lengthy reports and analyses of Christian social action in various parts of the world, which make up the major part of the survey. The survey takes particular note, however, of such trends as the new interest in social problems on the part of laymen, evident in many countries; the rethinking of the Church's task in society in the United States; the theological renewal and the effort to seek out the foundations for the life of the new European society on the Continent; the awakening ecumenical concern for social issues in the underdeveloped countries; and the challenges to and responses of the churches in communist countries. These are among the points which are treated at length in the several chapters on particular countries and areas.

In conclusion, the survey attempts to point towards the chief tasks lying immediately ahead of the churches all over the world. Four major areas are thought to be in need of special attention: first, the development of common Christian principles for the interpretation of the rapidly changing economic and political situation of the world; second, the more serious consideration of the role of the Church as an institution in society; third, the search for the spiritual resources for facing a world in which evil and despair are widespread; fourth, the particular study and action needed in relation to the economically and technically underdeveloped countries.

It is planned that future numbers of this Bulletin will contain detailed comment on various aspects of this survey and reports on the situation in those countries on which information was lacking when the survey was prepared.

(The ecumenical survey on Social Questions together with the surveys for the other Evanston topics is being published in the United States by Harper and Bros. (New York); the title of the volume is "~~The Church's Hope and Calling~~". "The Christian Hope and the Task of the Church"

The SCM Press in Great Britain will publish the surveys later this year. A German edition of the surveys has been published by Gotthelf-Verlag (Zurich and Frankfurt) and a French edition will be published soon and can be obtained by writing to the World Council of Churches, Geneva.)

J.T.